Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In Prague six months ago, President Obama reaffirmed the long-standing commitment of the United States to the overarching objectives of the NPT and to the underlying purpose of the work of the First Committee – namely, to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. He outlined a number of steps that the United States would take toward this goal, and encouraged other states to join us in this endeavor.

Among the steps which President Obama outlined were two of fundamental relevance to today’s thematic debate.

First, he committed the United States to negotiate and put into effect verifiable bilateral and multilateral nuclear arms control agreements to reduce drastically the level of nuclear armaments, stop the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons, and establish a global prohibition on nuclear explosions by aggressively pursuing U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its entry into force.

Second, President Obama called on all states to comply with their obligations and to hold other states accountable for their actions, stating, “We need real and immediate consequences for countries caught breaking the rules....” Otherwise, to paraphrase the President, if nations can break the rules with impunity, or even relative impunity, we could reach the point where the center – that is, the observance by other states of their arms control and nonproliferation obligations - no longer can hold.

Mr. Chairman, the importance of effective verification to the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons cannot be overstated. Our Canadian colleagues are to be commended for placing this topic once again on the agenda of this body. On August 15, 2007, a Panel of Governmental Experts submitted to the General Assembly document A/61/1028, a “Report on verification in all its aspects, including the role of the United Nations in the field of verification.” That report reaffirmed that verification is a useful tool
for strengthening international peace and security. Verification measures can advance the goal of a world without nuclear weapons by building confidence among nations and enhancing transparency. Most important, effective verification enables compliant states to confirm that their partners also are complying with their treaty commitments.

That, Mr. Chairman, is why it is so important that all states strive to establish appropriately robust and effective verification measures in bilateral and multilateral arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament agreements. It also explains why states must continue to work to improve national and collective verification capabilities, to assist appropriately other states in such endeavors, and to insist upon the full implementation of those verification tools and measures found in existing agreements. For our part, we are considering proposals for the verification of a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, and working closely with our Russian colleagues to incorporate effective verification measures into our follow-on Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. We also are continuing to work with and assist others, including through the work of the UNSC Resolution 1540 Committee and the implementing organs of existing treaties, to meet their relevant arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament commitments.

Regrettably, Mr. Chairman, implementation of agreed verification measures alone is, and will continue to be, insufficient to facilitate the achievement of a world without nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. As President Obama stated in Prague, “…we go forward with no illusions. Some countries will break the rules.” Therefore, he continued, “we need real and immediate consequences for countries caught breaking the rules.”

Mr. Chairman, President Obama’s call for consequences when any nation breaks the rules is a call that the Security Council, the General Assembly, and this body have endorsed on numerous occasions. Most recently, on September 24, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted UNSC Resolution 1887, which recognized the important benefits to international peace and security of compliance and of appropriate and effective measures to deter, detect, and respond to noncompliance. The Council demanded that parties comply fully with their obligations under relevant UNSC resolutions and find early negotiated solutions to their noncompliance. It also called upon states to take steps to strengthen their implementation of and compliance with existing obligations, and encouraged states in a position to do so to assist those in need to meet their obligations.
This body and the General Assembly, through resolutions A/RES/60/55 (2005) and A/RES/63/59 (2008), have called upon all UN Member States to take concerted action, in a manner consistent with relevant international law, to encourage, through bilateral and multilateral means, the compliance by all States with their respective obligations under non-proliferation, arms limitation, disarmament, and other such agreements. Those resolutions also called on states to hold those not in compliance with such agreements accountable for their non-compliance, in a manner consistent with the Charter of the United Nations. Those same texts further encouraged efforts by states, the United Nations, and other international organizations, pursuant to their respective mandates, to take action, consistent with the Charter, to prevent serious damage to international security and stability arising from non-compliance.

Holding states accountable for their violations strengthens not only confidence in the integrity of the agreements that have been violated, but also in the prospects for progress toward a safe, secure world free of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. On the other hand, failure to hold states accountable for their actions undercuts not only the integrity of agreements, but also the prospects for future progress. Further, it enables continued and, perhaps, broadened noncompliance, which can increase the threats to regional and global instability.

Mr. Chairman, if states genuinely seek – as our Delegation believes that most do – the peace and security of a world free of nuclear weapons, then, as President Obama stated in Prague, “Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something. The world must stand together to prevent the spread of these weapons.”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.